193 conceptions were still current, it was considered as a feminine principle. This supposition is confirmed by the fact that *rivers* (nambu. pl. milambu) also have the feminine termination (I. p. 36, Note). I find the following names of rivers ending in *ti* : Nkomati, Nfoloti (Umbelosi), Ñwebeti, Shalati, Timbati ; the termination *etsi*, *edzi*, may be another form of the same suffix (Ñwanetsi, Ntsatsi, Shingwedzi, Madzi, etc.). A very curious fact, which shows the same conception, is that the river which crosses the territory of the Tembe clan is called Mi-Tembe. I first thought this to be a plural form of the mu-mi class ; but it is more natural to explain this *mi* as the feminine prefix (1) which means daughter of, as Migogwe, etc. (I. p. 352).

823 784 824 789 133 *Crossing rivers* is subject to a curious rule. It is taboo to bathe in the stream before crossing it ; taboo also for the traveller to cook his food on the hither side of the river ; he must first cross, and then take his meal. This rule is still universally observed by waggon trekkers in South Africa. In this case there may be a reason for the taboo : South African rivers are apt to be swollen in a moment by sudden rain, and the crossing made impossible for days : the traveller therefore makes haste ; he will have plenty of time to stop on the other side! When the river is dangerous, a Thonga will first chew (phora) a little of his *ndjao*, the root of a juncus, which is supposed to increase courage and to ensure victory over hostile influences. (See Part VI.)

823 769 776 782 Some *Lakes* and *Rivers* are believed to be inhabited by spirits, but not in the ordinary fetichistic way, in which a special spiritual being is incorporated with the natural object ; these spirits are *paikwembo*, spirits of the deceased ancestors of the owners of the land, and are propitiated by their descendants. Should another clan have invaded the territory where these lakes are, and crocodiles threaten the fishermen, (p. 88) they will call some one belonging to the clan of the old possessors of the country and ask him to make an offering to appease *his* gods. This is the ordinary course, and the more closely we search the more completely these lake and

(1) A number of river names have the prefix *li* or *ri*, especially those which are of Sotho origin : Lebvubye. Ritabi (Letaba) Ritshindjele (Letsitele), Rimbelule (Lepalala, Olifant). Others begin with *ñwa*, *mu*, and may be ancient names of men.

What is the connection between abnormal births of human beings and the rain-fall? I think it can be found in the conception of Heaven which has inspired so many curious rites, and which I shall explain in the next chapter. So it is possible that, after all, the mbelele rite has a religious idea at its base.

b) *Rain charms.*

The removal of the corpses of abnormal children from dry ground and their burial near the river probably sometimes proves ineffective to produce rain. So Bantu magicians have invented a great many charms to obtain the greatly desired showers, and the power of the rain-makers is enormous. Our tribe does not seem to have developed this art as much as others. The Sutho-Pedis are masters in this domain and Mankhelu, who had been taught by them and had become a great and renowned rain-maker, revealed all his secrets to me. He possessed the drug and used it frequently, he said, having often been called in by Sutho chiefs dwelling in far distant districts, as far off as Pretoria. He assured me that he had met with so much success that these chiefs had given him oxen, horses, a waggon, precious beads, etc.! Where had he found this marvellous drug? At Rivimbi (in Venda : Luvimbi), a country north of Spelonken, not far from the Limpopo and to which he went, as far as I could make out, in 1865 or 1866. The Luvimbi people are the descendants of Luvimbi, (1) a chief of the old times (as old as Nkuna, says Mankhelu) who, after his death, went to heaven and became king of heaven ; he still exists there as a spirit, hearing and knowing everything that is done on earth. This Luvimbi is probably the same whom the Vendas call the first man, and concerning whom they have a number of traditions which I shall mention a little later.

and those of still-born children or those who died at birth ; to these they add their old rags (perhaps the cloths used for their menses?) ; they bring all those impurities to the cross-ways and *burn them* there, singing impure songs, saying : "To-day is a great day! There is no taboo any more! If you prohibit anything, it will be an insult to the rain; it will not fall." The smoke of all that they have burnt constitutes a religious offering : now the country will be pure and the rain will fall. The conception prevailing among the Malelekes is somewhat different from that of the Rongas.

(1) I have published an account of the Venda traditions connected with Luvimbi or Raluvimbi in *The S. A Journal of Science*, April 1921, where more details will be found concerning this personage.

river spirits become identified with ancestor-gods. In my investigations I found one case, however, where a special spirit, a kind of Nature spirit seemed to be invoked. This was on the sea shore, in the northern part of Nondwane, at a place called Mahilane, where there are two great rocks on the beach. When the great waves dash against them, with a fearful roar, people go and sacrifice (hahla) ; they pray thus : "Tsu! Oh sea! Let vessels be wrecked, and steamers also, and let their riches come to us and help us." In former times, a young girl was sometimes exposed there as a prey, or an offering to the power of Mahilane. Now this is exactly what is done in the sacred woods for the ancestor gods and, in fact, Mboza asserts that : "When abandoning the girl, the officiant says : You, Psikwembo, ancestor-gods, drive on the sea that it may wreck vessels." 823 769 776 782

When urged to speak with more precision, my informant answered : "Mahilane and the sea are one and the same thing (ntshumu munwe). When the sea is roaring people exclaim : 'Mahilane roars'! Near the island of Shefin, where two branches of the Nkomati river meet in the estuary, people say : 'Makaneta is roaring'. Here it is Makaneta and no longer Mahilane." 823 776 769

This information is extremely interesting. As regards Makaneta, we know him perfectly well ; he is the ancestor of Mboza and descendant of Mazwaya (I. p. 360). This ancestor-god begins to be confused with a natural phenomenon taking place in the country where he lived. The religious fear of the spirit of the deceased mingles with the awe inspired by the roaring of the sea to such an extent that both notions coincide in the imagination of the savage. We here note the exact point where *an ancestral spirit evolves into a Nature spirit*, and this instance proves, in the clearest possible manner, that the conception of the ancestor spirit preceded that of the Nature spirit. Here, at any rate, Ancestrolatry is anterior to both Fetichism and Naturism. These later forms of the belief can be easily accounted for by the development of Ancestrolatry : the reverse process would be much more difficult to explain.

The *sea*, with its immensity and its wonderful power, deeply impresses the Thongas dwelling near it. They do not however tell many stories about it, nor did I hear of any explanation 823

773 introduced fire and the culinary art into the world! This idea is
826 interesting and seems to show that, to the Native mind, the cooking of food is the pursuit which differentiates man from the animals.

177 In the clans of Maluleke and Spelonken there is a third tradition
773 relating to the first man, but it has certainly been borrowed from the Venda or Pedi tribes. They say the first man was *Rivimbi* and his son *Khudjana* (name transformed into Hobyana according to Thonga phonetics). The Thongas only say that Hobyana is the creator of Heaven and Earth and the first ancestor of the race. But the Vendas and Pedis have a number of traditions about these two heroes (1).

2) The cause of death.

773 When the first human beings emerged from the marsh of
826 reeds, the chief of this marsh sent the Chameleon (Lumpfana)
761 to them, with this message: "Men will die, but they will rise again." The Chameleon started walking slowly, according to his habit. Then the big lizard with the blue head, the Galagala, was sent to tell men: "You shall die and rot." Galagala started with his swift gait and soon passed Lumpfana. He delivered his message, and when Lumpfana arrived with his errand, men said to him: "You are too late. We have already

773 (1) Here is one of the most curious of these traditions, a strange story indeed,
776 when we reflect that these two personages are the great gods who created the uni-
177 verse! Once, in olden times, Khudjana planted a big pole in the earth, and passed spokes through it, right to the top. Rivimbi having climbed up, Khudjana took out the lower spokes and went home. His father being unable to get down, the son stole the food prepared for him and ate it at his ease. Then he again put the spokes in their places and the old man came home. But when he wished to have his meal, he found that nothing was left. His wife then gave him Khudjana's portion!

There is great confusion amongst these traditions. According to Mankhelu this Rivimbi, or Luvimbi, is the same as the great rain-maker to whose descendants he went to obtain the rain medicine (p. 320). He is not only the creator of the earth, but the protecter of all men, who are his sons. So, if some one wishes to harm a man who is not guilty, the Vendas say to him: "Do not kill Luvimbi's man." If you steal a partridge caught in a trap which was not set by you, they say: "Luvimbi, who stands on that tree, sees you." He would seem to be a superior being, a god (shikwembu), even the chief of gods, endowed with omnipresence and omniscience. Moreover there is a relation between Rivimbi and Nwali, the Ba-Nyai god, who is represented either as father or son of Rivimbi, or identical with him. It may be that the Rivimbi tradition, which is both Pedi and Venda and seems to refer definitely to a first ancestor who has become the great god, has been mixed with the Nwali tradition, which is Nyai, so that ideas of different origins have been intermingled.

771 easy to perceive. In the quartz of the South African veldt, miners, in their investigations, sometimes strike a reef : they crush the hard stone, wash it, apply to it certain chemical tests and find there is gold in the reef. This is similar to an experience which I once had when conversing with Thonga natives. Quite unexpectedly I heard them speaking of *Heaven*, not as a kind of impersonal being, but as a king, endowed with great power and omniscience, who must be feared by thieves, because he knows them. Persevering in my inquiries, I discovered this second set of religious intuitions, quite distinct from the first, viz., the *Deistic Conception of Heaven*. I intend now to describe these two parts of the Thonga religious system. Later on we may discuss their relation to each other. "System" is perhaps too big a word, for no Native philosopher or theologian has ever classified this somewhat confused mass of religious ideas, and we must not look for anything logical and organic. We may even meet with contradictions, conflicting statements... While trying to bring some order into the subject, I will endeavour at the same time to give a faithful and reverent explanation of Native ideas.[1]

A. ANCESTROLATRY.

1. *The Ancestor-Gods (Psikwembu).*

1) The name of the ancestor-gods.

769 Any man who has departed this earthly life, becomes a
● 776 *shikwembu*, a god. We shall show, later on, that to translate
193 "shikwembu" by god (with a small "g") is by no means incorrect. The word is indeed interesting, but unhappily no light is thrown on it by etymology. It belongs to the shi-psi class, the class of instruments. Take the verb "famba" to walk ; put the prefix "shi" in front of it, and change the final "a" into "o" and you obtain "shifambo" — "the thing with which one walks!" So shikwembu would mean "the thing with which one *kwemba*." Only this

[1] [For complete discussion of Thonga religion, see pp. 372-450, category 116.-- Analyst]

stem *kwemba* is never used, and its meaning is unknown. There is another form, *nkwembu*, of the class mu-mi, very rarely used, and having the same meaning, and the word *bukwembu*, the abstract noun derived from the same root. Bukwembu is the "power which creates life and death, which gives riches, or which makes poor," says Viguet. In Pedi the ancestor-gods are called *badimo*, a word which seems to be related to *Khedimo* (above, in heaven). But I have heard this connection doubted (1). In Zulu the etymology of *indhlozi* and *itongo*, employed to designate the ancestor-gods, is also unknown, which is a pity, as it would have been interesting to see if the stem from which they come also means above. Is it not strange that in these three closely-connected languages the terms used for the spirits, about which they have exactly the same ideas, are absolutely without any linguistic relation? In Sutho, these spirits belong to the class "mu-ba," the class of persons, which seems natural. In Zulu their two names are of the class yin-tin and dji-ma, respectively; in Thonga they belong to the shi-psi class. This dissimilarity is indeed curious.

2) Categories of Ancestor-Gods.

Since every human being becomes a shikwembu after death, there are consequently many categories of these. What is the fate of little children? If they die in infancy no religious ceremony is performed over their grave, nor are any prayers offered to them. The twig rite (I. p. 142) only begins for children who have died at the age of puberty. Infants are, however, seen in the sacred woods amongst the adult gods. This is one of the points about

(1) The Vendas call the ancestor-gods *badzimo*, which is evidently the same word as the Sutho badimo. The Rev. Th. Schwellnus told me he thought that the etymology of this word was the verb dzima (in Thonga tima) which means to extinguish (Timula tora means to quench the thirst). The badzimo would thus be those who bring relief, who remove anguish. As this stem dzimo under various forms is widespread amongst the Bantu tribes to designate the ancestor-gods, it would be interesting to know if the corresponding verb dzima also exists and if this etymology is clearly established. The word *ntimu*, sacred wood, in Thonga, may perhaps come from the same root.

776 which there is no very clear explanation ; doubtless the matter did
769 not seem worthy of inquiry!

The two great categories of gods are *those of the family*, and *those of the country*, the latter being those of the reigning family. They lo not differ as regards their nature. In national calamities those of the country are invoked, whilst, for purely family matters, those of the family are called upon.

769 Moreover, each family has two sets of gods, those *on the father's*
776 *side* and *those on the mother's*, those of "kweru" and those of
602 "bakokwana" (I. p. 268). They are equal in dignity. Both can be invoked, and the divinatory bones are always called on to decide to which the offering must be made. It would seem, however, as if the gods of the mother's side were more tender-hearted and more popular than those of the father's. The reason for this is, perhaps, that relations are easier with the family of the mother than with that of the father. It is also just possible that it is a relic of the matriarchal period, when the ancestors of the mother alone were known, and consequently invoked. At any rate, the part played by batukulu nephews in the offerings shows that they are the true representatives of the gods, not of those of their father, but of their mother.

776 Two other categories of gods, which I have sometimes heard
769 mentioned, are the *Gods of assagais* (psikwembu psa matlhari)
766 and *the Gods of bitterness* (psa shibiti). The former are those who have been killed in battle ; the latter are those who have been drowned, killed by a wild beast, or who have committed suicide, or the pregnant woman who has been buried without being cut open (I. p. 166). In most of these cases, as is evident, the corpse has not been buried with the due rites and ceremonies ; the deceased has not been properly cared for : hence his bitterness ; or, as in the case of the pregnant woman, something has been buried without having first breathed its last breath (I. p. 140). In the case of the suicide, the poor man who hanged himself was full of sadness : "The great bitterness is the rope", said Mboza. In most of these cases no one was present at the death! These gods are therefore angry, and are the most to be feared.

000 The *Gods of the Bush, Psikwembu psa Nhoba*, are also especially

The Gods of the Bush, Psikwembu psa Nhoba, are also especially dreaded. There is a little song which is sung as a welcome to travellers who reach their home safely :

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Shikwembu sha nhoba shi etlele !
Shi etlele, banhwanyana !
Amadikeo-dikeo-dikeo !
The god of the bush has remained asleep !
He has remained asleep, young girls !
Hurrah ! hurrah ! hurrah !

The spirits of the departed who wander about in the bush, not having been properly buried, try to attack innocent travellers. You are fortunate to escape their anger! For this reason they often say to a relative who is starting out on a journey : "Go with your god," viz., the special ancestor-god who can protect you against the dangers of the bush.

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I have also heard mention of *Shikwembu sha tihanye*, the god of quarrels. When an offering prescribed by the bones and presented to a certain ancestor-god has not had the desired result, people say : "This god is a god of quarrels. Let us make an offering to the others so that they may scold him."

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3) The Abode of the Ancestor-Gods and their Mode of Life.

Ideas on these two points are very confused, even contradictory. Some say that the departed go to a great village *under the earth*, a village where everything is white (or pure, "ku basa") ; there they till the fields, reap great harvests, and live in abundance, and they take of this abundance to give to their descendants on earth. They have also a great many cattle. The place where they live seems to be a kind of Hades or Paradise (1). But it would seem, when we consider the funeral rites, that the deceased, on the contrary,

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(1) The Ba-Ila (see Smith and Dale, *The Ila-speaking people*, II p. 119) believe that the ghosts go *Kutuse*, to the East, to Chilenga, the Creator. But they have the same contradictory ideas as the Thongas concerning the abode of their deceased ancestors.

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Amongst the Natives of Barotseland, on the Zambezi, it is said that the dead go to Nyambe, the God of Heaven. They pierce the lobe of their ears and make other incisions in their bodies as a sign that they belong to Nyambe. When they die and reach the end of the earth at the great river Walamba (the Styx of the Zambezian tribes) the ferryman who conveys the dead to the other bank looks at them to see if

775 remains *in his grave*. Is not his grave his house (I. p. 137)? Does
776 he not sit on his square, where his mats have been unrolled? Thus
787 the life of the shikwembu seems to be the exact continuation of his earthly existence. That such is the idea is proved by the two bones which represent the gods in the set of divinatory bones : 1) the astragalus or nail of an ant-bear, because ant-bears live in the earth, and come out only during the night ; 2) the astragalus of an antelope, found in the excrement of a hyena ; the hyena ate the antelope, and swallowed the bone, which came to light again ; in the same way the gods have been buried in the ground, and reveal themselves later on. (Compare Ch. III. D.) A third idea, more or less intermediate between the other two, is that the gods reside *in the sacred woods*, and there lead their family life in human form, parents and children, even little children, who are carried on their mothers' shoulders. Mboza went so far as to say that they are married and bring forth children, as children are seen on their mothers' backs. Here again, we find the life of the other world regarded as the exact reproduction of this terrestrial existence.

4) The Sacred Woods.

764 These are vast, almost impenetrable thickets, in which the
769 ancient chiefs have been buried ; they are called *ntimu*, (mu-mi)
778 cemeteries. Every clan owns one or more of these burying places. The ntimu is reserved for the men of the royal family, those who have been the owners of the land. They are buried in different sections of the forest, "according to their villages," in such a way that the wood represents separate cemeteries, corresponding to the

171 they bear the marks, and only in that case does he take them to Nyambe (See *Ames primitives*, Th. Burnier, Paris Mission, 102, Boulevard Arago).

The Ba-Chopi believe that their ancestor-gods dwell in rivers. They have no fear of the graves where the deceased have been buried, and even till the ground over them, asserting that the bones alone remain in the earth, the ghosts themselves having departed into the river where they are heard singing, dancing, and playing on antelope horns. When the chiefs make a national offering, they mix the meat with water when they present it to their gods, and the one officiating turns his eyes towards the river when he prays. He places the part of the victim which has been cut out for the gods on the bank of the river, and everybody goes home. The gods come when all have gone and take the offering. It is taboo to remain on the spot and to be seen by them!

769 there. It is inculcated, and kept alive, by the truly terrifying tales
778 which are told concerning them. These are related in the evening,
538 in low tones, and with frightened looks, and the feeling of awe is
776 fed and maintained by these legends. I intend to narrate here those I heard from various informants ; these stories will illustrate better than any philosophical explanation the ideas of the Natives concerning their gods. Those connected with the Libombo wood are the most typical. I owe them to Spoon and the aged Nkolele. I will begin with those which are of most ancient origin, and whose legendary character is most unmistakable.

539 One day a woman was passing close by the forest of Libombo : she
776 plucked a sala (p. 16) from a tree and ate it, after which she went to till
769 her garden. On another occasion, just as she was cracking another sala against the trunk of a tree before eating it, she saw that the fruit, instead of having a stone inside, was filled with small vipers. She threw it away, but the vipers said to her : "Go on! Eat away! Haven't we seen you every day picking sala? And these sala are ours, and not yours. What shall we gods have to eat? Have we not made this tree to grow?" And she went home and died, because she had been cursed by the gods.

Another woman was passing by the forest on a rainy day, and saw a child, who had climbed a tree, and was eating berries. She approached the child and said : "Give me some of those berries!" The boy made no reply, so she began to pick some for herself. When she had picked enough, she said : "Are you going on picking berries in such a rain as this! Where is your mother?" He still remained silent. She felt sorry for the child, thinking he was indeed to be pitied : — "Come," said she, "and let me carry you on my back." So she went up to the tree, and lifted down the child, and tied him on her back with her shawl ; then, putting her conical basket on her head, she started for home. On arriving at her hut, she saw that a fire had been lighted on account of the rain. — "Put on some more wood," said she, "for the sake of this little one, whom I found on the road eating berries." She untied the shawl, and tried to place the child on her hips, but he refused to be moved, and clung to her back, where he kept quite still. The folks said to the woman : "Put him down on the ground, so that he can go and warm himself near the embers." He refused. Then they said to him : "Get down!" But he still refused to move. Then the villagers said to the woman : "Didn't you pass by the Libombo forest?" — "Yes! I did," she replied, "and there I found this child gathering berries, and

brought him along with me." — "This is no child! It is a god!" they cried ; "a child never has a hard head like this one has. And look at his legs! What strength! How ever did you come to think it was a child?" —"But," said she, "I certainly thought it was a child — and can it be a god?" — They sent for magicians, who threw the bones. At once the magicians knew what was wrong : — "Ha! Hé! You found him at Libombo, did you not?" They tried to remove him by force, but he clung still more closely to the woman's back, stiffening his legs round her waist, and his arms around her neck. They tried to unclench his hands, but it was impossible! Then they begged her to go back to Libombo, and implore the owners of the forest to set her free from this child. She took her basket, and returned to the tree where she had found him. The guardian of the forest soon appeared. It was Makundju, the ancestor of Nkolele. He inveighed against the woman and those who accompanied her, saying : — "When you find fruit in the forest, do not pick it! If it be maize, leave it alone, or, if you pick it, spare at least one ear. If your chicken flies into the wood, do not go after it. If your goat runs away into it, you must not follow it. We are worn out, we folks of Libombo, with offering sacrifices for you passers-by... Your troubles are the consequences of the sins (psihono) you commit in this place." A white hen was caught, and sacrificed on behalf of the woman. Emitting the "tsu" the priest said : "Behold our ox, by which we present our petition. Let this god leave her back. She did not do it on purpose. She thought it was a child ; she did not know it was a god. Which way can people go henceforth if you, gods, put obstacles in the way?" While this sacrifice was being offered, the being suddenly left her back, disappeared, and no one knew how, or whither he went. As for the woman, she trembled violently and died...

A man once defied the prohibition of cutting dry wood in the forest. Suddenly he was pelted from behind with kwakwa and sala fruits. It was the gods. He tried to fly, but was unable to find the path out of the thicket. He was lost, and tired of wandering about he let his bundle of faggots fall. Then the gods allowed him to find his way out again, but, when he found himself in the open, he perceived that he was carrying nothing, even his axe had been taken from him.

Sometimes the gods made themselves heard ; when they were especially happy they played on trumpets, sang and danced. Passers-by often tried to get a glimpse of them, but the noise

776 ceased at once, and would commence again suddenly right behind
778 the listeners. The people of the country know quite well whence this music comes, and, at Libombo, they can even report the song which is heard in this forest. It is a great pity that I was not able to obtain the music of this ode of the gods! I can, however, give the words, which will probably be found to smack considerably of the earth, earthy! —

> With ground- nuts and onions, nté, nté, nté!
> Make a good sauce in the pan!

However, here are one or two facts of quite recent occurrence, showing that the age of sacred wood miracles is not yet over, or that, at least, the religious awe still survives in some faithful hearts!

Spoon assured me that he saw on one occasion a whole herd of goats in the forest, while he was picking tihuhlu nuts. He ran to tell his grandfather, Nkolele, and to ask if he might appropriate them. Nkolele reproved him with bitter words: "Unhappy man! Don't dare to touch them! They belong to the gods! Don't even speak of them! It is taboo! (paa yila)."

The young folks of Libombo used to blaspheme in their hearts, saying: "There are no gods." "But," added Spoon, "we very soon saw that there were some, when they killed one of us, named Mapfindlen. He was walking along the path, singing and jumping, when he trod on a snake, which he had not seen, and hurt it. During the night the gods came to him. He began to scratch himself all over his body. He saw them against the wall: they were like snakes, and they said: 'Thou hast hurt us!' No one else saw them. His mother tried to quiet him, but he shrieked, and said to her: 'Leave me alone! The gods are killing me because I trod on them! Help!' They threw the bones. The diviner said: 'This comes from your household gods! Has he not trodden on a snake?' His parents procured an offering, and sacrificed to the gods, trying to propitiate them; but the gods were angry and Mapfindlen died."

The following is the most recent of the stories. It was related to me by the hero himself, Nkolele, the aged priest of Libombo.

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After the war of 1894-1895, the Portuguese Authorities established a camp at Morakwen, and decided to build a town there. To do this it became necessary to widen the primitive pathway which led to Lourenço Marques, and Natives had to cede trees and grass lands, to the extent of several metres on each side of the path ; then a fine road was built of some 20 kilometres in length. This road passed close by the sacred wood, as it had been decided to follow the line of the pathway, which skirted this wood for a distance of about half a mile. Amongst many other trees was one huge mahogany, under whose shade I have frequently passed, which sent out a low branch, right over the path ; it was necessary to cut off this branch, and the people living in the neighbourhood were intrusted with the job. "When they began the work," said Nkolele to me, on the 28th November, 1895, "I went to see what they were doing with the mahogany tree. As I was seated the gods came to me, saying : 'What are you doing here? You ought to have stayed at home.' I fell backwards unconscious, and remained in that state for four days. I couldn't eat : they had closed my mouth. I could not speak! My people picked me up and carried me home. My relatives and my children were all summoned : the villagers said : 'Our medicine-man has left us! He is dead!' Then my eldest son went to offer a sacrifice in the sacred wood. He let loose a fowl, which flew away and never returned ; he prayed : 'Oh! my ancestors! Here is my ox. Do not slay my father!' Then I got up. Ah! It was he, who saved me, Ngeleñwana, my eldest son! I looked around and said : 'What have all these people come here for?' They were terror stricken. Then they told me that the gods of Libombo were angry with me. The gods said to me (doubtless by means of the bones) : 'Take an ox-cock' (meaning an ox, an animal for sacrifice, which may be a cock), 'and go to your brother Shihubane. Let him give you a fowl, and go and sacrifice. Why did you go there? You ought to have stayed at home, and have sent your children.' I did not go any more by the big road. I go by the path through the marshes, and never by the avenue made by the Whites. Now I can go that way, for I have sacrificed, and the gods have said : 'He has asked our pardon by means of his gifts."

Is there not something significant and touching about this tale? Civilisation penetrates irresistibly, crushing everything in its way, and cutting remorselessly, perhaps unwittingly, through the edge of the sacred wood! And there, under the mahogany

776 tree, the aged priest, the guardian of its traditions, swoons away
778 and asks forgiveness for having been an involuntary witness of the sacrilege!

These stories are by no means restricted to the Libombo sacred wood. Similar tales are told of all the forests. Mboza says :

A woman was imprudent enough to cut some dry branches in the sacred wood of Masinge, near Morakwen. She at once heard an unusual voice : bi... bi... and received blows. She ran-away home leaving her garment in the bush. Having arrived home, she asked her husband to go and fetch it, but he refused, from fear. Nkomuza, the guardian of the forest, went to fetch it, but they had to reward him with a bottle of wine.

An older story about the same forest runs as follows : — In olden times the gods were frequently seen marching in file, going to draw water from the well. They had their own road. They were of short stature, the women carrying babies in the *ntehe*, but, strange to say, with the feet up and the head downwards! A man, called Mishimhongo, built his village near to the forest. The gods, angry with him, entered his huts while he was busy with all his people working in the fields. Only a little child remained in the village, and the gods wrapped him up in a mat, and hid him somewhere behind the huts. Then they went to the garden and shouted : "Mishimhongo! There are visitors in your village." The man looked to see who was calling him, but saw no one. He went home, and found that the child had disappeared. In the evening the gods came and said to him : "Look behind the huts. But move at once ; do not remain near our road! If you do so, we shall kill you and your child." The poor man needed no second warning!

Not far from this place, in the Nkanyen district, is the sacred wood of Tlhatlha. An enormous pot is said to have been placed there long ago, a marvellous pot which possesses the faculty of locomotion. It can move as far as that village yonder (half a mile). But though it may have arrived only yesterday at the spot where you see it, it is quite hidden in the grass and shrubs, as if it had been there for years! It takes its walk from one end of the graves to the other. It is taboo to touch it! When the Portuguese tried to establish a camp there, they heard strange noises during the night, drums, trumpets, etc. The Landis (Natives) said to them : "Take care! There are gods here." So they removed their camp to Morakwen. (Mboza.)

The wood of Tembe, called Mudlomadlomana, is very celebrated.

It is said that, in olden days, there was an anchor there, and before sacrificing, the priest always used to lift it up, and let it fall to the ground, saying: "Shawan! (I salute thee) Tembe!" If the sacrifice was acceptable the sound of a trumpet: "bvé... bvé...," was heard, far away in the depths of the woods, but no form was ever seen. This anchor also possessed extraordinary powers. When the country was at war with its neighbours, and matters did not go well with Tembe, the anchor would move off by itself into the Matjolo district. This was the portent of some terrible catastrophe! 776 778

No one ever penetrated very far into the sacred wood of Tryini, of the Matjolo clan, for it was said that any one doing so would be lost, and unable to find his way out. When the people of Matjolo were in need of rain, they took a young man of the country into the wood, and there abandoned him. The gods accepted their offering, and the young man, struck with paralysis, was unable to follow in their retreat those who had led him to martyrdom! He saw them going away, but remained behind to be devoured by the gods. The others hastened to sacrifice and returned home; they were forbidden to look behind them. Once home, they told how they had seen on the ground, in the wood, foot-prints of adults, and even of little ones who must have been old enough to crawl on their hands and knees! Often, they say, they brought back the rain with them! [789]

According to all these stories, it is evident that, in the Thonga mind, the ancestor-gods dwell in the sacred woods, and lead a life there in the earth, and occasionally outside, very similar to the terrestrial one. Mankhelu had, however, another idea, which is difficult to reconcile with this representation. On his forked magic pole he had a long shining grey branch of a climbing shrub called *ñcabola*. This has enormous thorns, which are supposed to have the power of calling the precious things which are far away, and of gathering them in the hut: money, oxen, girls to marry, etc., and also the ancestor-gods: "When they pass through the country, coming from our old domicile, near the Limpopo, they are caught by the thorns, and settle here to bless us." This idea that the gods fly through the air, is very rarely met 769 776 778 789 769 776

769 with. I never heard it said that the gods were in heaven, not-
776 withstanding the Sutho term badimo, which is believed by some to mean those who are above.

5. Relations between Ancestor-gods and their living descendants.

769 The apparitions of ancestor-gods in a human form in the
776 sacred woods are not of frequent occurrence. The gods reveal
825 themselves to their descendants by other and more common
753 means; first, by their appearance *in the form of animals*, such as the Mantis (p. 335) or more often as little bluish green snakes called *shihundje* (p. 340). These charming and harmless reptiles are frequently seen in the huts, crawling in the thatch of the roof, or along the reeds of the walls (1). Natives never touch them, thinking that they are some of their gods who have come to pay them a visit. It is taboo to kill them. If a disease breaks out in the village the bones may reveal that some one in the hut has hurt the gods, and a sacrifice will be required in order to appease them. They also appear in the form of the large grey puff-adder (shiphyahla) (2).

769 Secondly, the ancestor-gods communicate with the living
776 *in their dreams*. If some one dreams of one of his dead relatives,
787 he is very much frightened, and consults the bones, in order

769 (1) This is the story which I heard from one of my informants of the Khosa
825 country: All his family was once assembled together for a marriage feast. The people were playing on the village square and enjoying themselves. The old woman had remained in the hut, and suddenly they saw two little green snakes crawling along the reeds of the wall. They were much afraid, and at once called the headman. He came in, saw the snakes, and said: "Do not fear! These are our ancestor-gods! They have come to share in our feast."

(2) Describing to me a sacrifice at which he officiated either in September or October 1895, the old priest Nkolele told me as a fact the following story, which I will now quote word for word:

"I myself went into the wood with the offering I had prepared for the gods, and then *it* came out. It was a snake; it was the father of Makundju, the Master of the Forest, Mombo-wa-ndlopfu, Elephant's-Face. He came out and circled round all those present. The women rushed away terrified. But he had only come to thank us. He didn't come to bite us. He thanked us saying: 'Thank you! Thank you! So you are still there, my children! You came to load me with presents, and to

to know exactly what the god desires of him (Viguet). If the apparition was painful, if the god came as an enemy, fighting, the dreamer, when he awakes, will take some tobacco, or a small piece of cloth, and hang it somewhere in the reeds of the wall, near the door, as an offering. Or possibly the god has ordered him to give him something to drink. He will then buy a bottle of ginor wine, and pour a little outside the door; whatever remains he will drink with his companions. If the dream takes place during a journey and the ancestor-god seems to be happy, the traveller will throw some tobacco on the ground when he awakes and say: "I had prayed thee to help me on my road; thou hast come indeed! Help me to go further." But if the ancestor-god has an angry look and tells him: "Why do you not give me a piece of calico print? You have forgotten me"—the traveller will fetch a piece and tie it round a tree and say: "When I return home after making money, I will give thee some."

But the great means by which the will of the gods is revealed is the *set of divinatory bones*, which are cast on every occasion, and are called the "Bula," the Word. Does this mean the Word of the gods? Not precisely, but in most cases the diviner thinks he owes his divinatory power to a dead relative, who used to cast lots himself, and who transmitted his spirit of interpretation to him. Whatever may be the real explanation, the fact remains that it is by means of the bones that Thongas believe they know what their gods think and wish, and this is the reason, as we shall

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bring me fruit! T'is well!"— He came to thank us for our chicken. Even if one only kills a chicken, he is quite content. For him, it has just the same value as an ox. It was an enormous viper, as thick as my leg, down there (he pointed to his ankle). It came close up to me, and kept quite still, never biting me. I looked at it. It said: 'Thank you! So you are still there, my grandson!'"

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— "But," said I to Nkolele, "what you are telling me, is it really fact, or just fancy?"

— "Undoubted fact! These are great truths! After that I prayed, and said: 'Thou, Mombo-wa-Ndlopfu, the Master of this land, thou who hast given it to thy son Makundju; Makundju gave it to his son Hati; Hati gave it to Makhumbi; Makhumbi gave it to Kinini; Kinini gave it to Mikabyana; Mikabyana gave it to Mawatle... ('Mawatle gave it to me, his son' is here understood)... Look upon my offering. Is it not a beautiful one? And here am I, left all alone. If I had not brought this with me, who would have given you anything? Is it not just so? I ask of thee, my ancestor, I ask of thee all the trees; the palm trees for building, the trunks which can be hollowed out for canoes; and let it be that these trunks shall not fall on the people and crush them, when they go to cut them down, even them in the marsh.'"

787 see, why divination plays such an important part in their life.
769 It is of the utmost importance to know what their gods think
776 and do, as the very existence of the village, and of the clan, and the welfare of every member of the clan depends on them. Is not Lukwembo, Divinity "the power of killing or of making alive, of enriching or of making poor?" Natives believe firmly in these two opposite actions of their gods. They are the masters of everything : earth, fields, trees, rain, men, children, even of baloyi, wizards! They have full control over all these objects or persons.

769 The gods can *bless* : if the trees bear plenty of fruit, it is because
776 they have made it grow (I. p. 414) ; if the crops are plentiful,
777 it is because they forced wizards to increase them, or hindered them from spoiling them (I. p. 396) ; if you come across a pot of palm wine, it is your god who has sent you that windfall (p. 44). When Mboza escaped from the Morakwen battle, one of his relatives exclaimed on his return home : "The gods of Makaneta have still been with you!" (Psikwembu psa ka Makaneta psa ha ku yimelele.) Often when a man has narrowly escaped drowning, or spraining his ankle on a stump which has caught his foot, he will say : "The gods have saved me."

769 But they can also *curse*, and bring untold misfortune on their
776 descendants. If the rain fails, it is owing to their anger ; if a tree
789 falls on you, they have directed its fall ; if a crocodile bites you, the
753 gods have sent it ; if your child has fever and is delirious, they are in him, tormenting his soul ; if your wife is sterile, they have prevented her from childbearing ; perhaps the gods of your mother have done this, because you had not given your maternal uncle the *tjhumba* part of the lobolo, which he has the right to claim (I. p. 267) ; in fact any disease, any calamity may come from them. There are, of course, other sources of misfortune : the baloyi, for instance, or Heaven, and the bones will show who has caused the mischief ; but the ancestor-gods are certainly the most powerful spiritual agency acting on man's life. Hence the necessity of propitiating them by prayers and sacrifices.

gatherings, after a death, the elder brother entreats the gods to bless the family, to prevent bad feeling, or strife, to give wisdom and strength to the new headman, that he may be successful in his rule over the village (1).

When some great misfortune is the occasion for this religious act being performed, the petition is preceded, or followed, by a regular *insulting* of the gods. There are two words used to designate this curious part of the prayer : *holobela*, or *holobisa*, to scold the gods, or *rukatela*, the actual word for "to insult." There is an instance of this strangely impertinent manner of addressing the gods in the sacrifice for the sick nephew (p. 396). These insults are generally uttered while the priest is squeezing the psanyi over the shoulders of his subordinates.

The last part of the prayer is *its sudden termination*, when one of the uterine nephews puts a portion of the victim into the officiant's mouth, thus "cutting his oration" (tjema). This is a true part of the ritual. When the victim is a hen, it is the gizzard, which has been half roasted during the long prayer, that is used for this purpose. The priest eats it, and so is the first to partake of the flesh of the offering.

Prayers to the ancestors do not show very much religious feeling, and are, at any rate, absolutely devoid of awe. Whilst

(1) *Music* plays no part in Thonga religious ritual. During the preparation of the offering those present often sing, but these songs are those which accompany the ordinary dances and bear no religious character. I only once heard of a true sacred chant. Mungomane, the distinguished dancer and musician who made his living by the exercise of his art in the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques (p. 187) told me that when he presided over the worship in his village, he used to *sing his prayer*. He gave me the words, but unfortunately not the notes. They are worth quoting :

"Let the meat not stick in your throats ! Eat, you chiefs, you ancestor-gods... They are coming (the oxen) ; they see me, whilst I mourn you, my father and my mother, whilst I remain outside, where I receive life from you, who are below ; I remain, I am a miserable wretch.

"The oxen are slain ! Slay the oxen ! Here they are. I mourn you. Let us eat them together, you father and mother. Give me life and give it also to my children. Let us eat these oxen which I possess, but I possess them for you. Let us not suffer from complaints of the chest here in our home.

"This is the song by which we accompany you, as you return below. Let us remain in good health."

At a given moment the uterine nephew answered by saying :

"I magnify you, my father ! You shall see me, father and mother !"

And all those present, seeing that they would have plenty of meat to eat, joined in a chorus of praise, clapping their hands.

782 sacrificing, the Natives laugh, talk in loud tones, dance, sing
769 obscene songs, even interrupt the prayer with their remarks,
781 and insult each other about family matters. The officiant himself
533 sits on the seat designated by the bones, and speaks in a monoto-
776 nous manner, looking straight in front of him with utter indifference. There is nothing in his demeanour which denotes fear. An exception must perhaps be made in the case of those members of the Makaringe family who clapped their hands during the prayer in the same manner as when saluting "bakonwana" (p. 402). They have as much respect for the ancestor-gods as for their relatives-in-law, and that is, indeed, saying much. I have heard that in the Maputju country people kneel down during the prayer. In Nondwane women alone kneel, whilst the men sit on their heels, the customary attitude in worship (1). If the gods were actually old people, still living, they could not be addressed with more familiarity. This leads us finally to consider in what the divinity of the ancestor-gods consists.

d) The Divine Nature of the Ancestor-Gods.

776 I have brought together in a preceding paragraph (p. 372-386)
769 all that the Natives say about their gods. Now let us return to them, after having studied the religious ritual, and ask : What

(1) The Ma-Lemba, that curious tribe settled amongst the Thongas and Vendas of Spelonken which has certain Semitic customs (I p. 73) are much more respectful towards their ancestor-gods. They have prayer meetings at which the old men of many families assemble together ; one of them, he who knows the ancestors best, leads the others in prayer, "quoting all their mountains" viz. all the sacred hills where the ancestors have been buried, and at the end of each sentence they all answer : "hundjiii..." When the prayer is finished, they each raise an arm and say : "Amen !" This is one of the customs borrowed by them from the Semitic populations with which they came into contact in former times. When they heard Christians pronouncing the same word to conclude their prayers, they were very much astonished. One of them told me ; "This shows that we were Christians formerly and have become back-sliders." One of their formulae when praying is as follows. "You, so and so and so, help us and enable us to reach Mudzimu." Mudzimu is the name by which they designate the Supreme Being in whom they believe and of whom they say : "All that you eat, it is Mudzimu who gives it to you!" If a child refuses to obey, they say to him : "Mudzimu will see you !" For them the ancestor-gods are but intermediaries between themselves and Mudzimu. They often call themselves Basilamusi, Moslems, and claim that there were Moslems belonging to their tribes (A ba ri ba ka hina).

do all these ceremonies reveal as to the conceptions of the Thongas concerning the ancestral spirits which they worship? A striking contrast exists in their ideas. On the one hand, the ancestor-gods are *true gods*, endowed with the attributes of divinity, whilst, on the other, they seem to be merely *human beings*, exactly on the same level as their worshippers. 776 769

1) *They are divine!* When an old decrepit man or woman dies, he at once becomes a god : he has entered the domain of infinity. The Thongas have no very clear idea of infinity. They have, however, a technical term for it : "lepsi nga yiki helo (Dj.), or mbangu (Ro.)" — "that which does not reach the point where it ends." This idea has certainly been extented to the shades which have attained the rank of psikwembu. The psikwembu are *omnipresent*. As Mankelu says : "For them there is no such thing as distance (a psi na kule) ; they are everywhere present (psi kone hikwaku). They are like heaven, the sun and the moon. There is no place where it can be said that the moon is not." The notion of *omnipresence* is perhaps that which has been understood most clearly. *Omniscience* is also believed in : the gods know what their descendants do, though they may be separated from them, perhaps dwelling in distant lands. *Omnipotence* results from the fact that they control everything in the life of their descendants. They are superior to wizards in this respect. As regards their connection with Heaven, I have never heard the point discussed. Natives do not philosophise. Thus the ancestral spirits are true gods endowed with divine attributes.

2) *They are still, however, only men!* They are not transcendent beings before whom miserable sinners tremble and offer prayers. The attitude of the worshippers, which I have just described, the freedom they show in insulting their gods, indicates that they consider them as exactly on the same level as themselves. This human nature of the gods is clearly shown by two facts : the limits of their power and their want of moral character. The domain in which they exercise their power is limited, being only *that of their own family* ; they watch over their descendants, bless or punish them, but they are absolutely indifferent to other men, and do not trouble about their affairs more than they did when still alive

776 on earth. I have nothing to fear or to hope from my neighbour's
769 gods, if I do not belong to the same "shibongo" (I. p. 360). The gods of the royal family are invoked on behalf of the whole country, and have power to give rain to the land ; but it is the chief and his uncles who must approach and sacrifice to them. I have no right to do so. It is true that an exception seems to be made in the case of the gods of bitterness, or of the bush, who attack the traveller, although he belongs to another family. But this is indeed only an exceptional case, it being their kinsfolk, who neglected to bury them, who are most exposed to their wrath.

Another proof that they are men is this : although as gods they have acquired these divine ontological powers, they have made no real moral progress. They are not better than they were as men. Their *character* is that of suspicious old people, who resent any want of respect, or attention, on the part of their descendants. They wish to be thought of, and presented with offerings. It would seem that they are not actually in need of anything, for they live in abundance, but they exact a punctual observance of the duties of their descendants in regard to them. They must *luma*, eat the first fruits, and have their share of the tobacco leaves and also of the ground tobacco. They are jealous,
783 and avenge themselves when forgotten (1). The only sin which
769 seems to be deserving of punishment is to neglect them. There
776 are, however, two other faults which they strongly condemn, and for which they may even kill their descendants : the first is any serious *transgression against the law of hierarchy* (as we saw, when dealing with the sacrifice of reconciliation) ; they punish especially the young man, even though he be the chief, who dares thus to

539 (1) In a very interesting tale, which is unique, and which I owe to Camilla and have published in *Les Chants et Contes des Ba-Ronga*, p. 264, we hear of the people of Mashaken, near Lourenço Marques forgetting for many years to make offerings to their gods. Famine ensues. The men go to the marsh to cut sugar canes. They are unable to break them, and the gods chase them away. The women, who come to a place where honey is flowing from a tree, try to take the combs, but their hands break off and remain fixed to the spot ! The bones order Sabulana, a young girl, to go to the sacred wood to sacrifice. She enters the forest and sees the gods assembled. They say to her : "Tell your people that they have sinned, because they have tilled the ground and harvested without presenting us with any offerings. Now we are glad, because they have come to invoke us." This story was told me as a tale, not as a legend of the sacred woods.

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encroach upon the right of the *regular priest*, which is a great taboo ; secondly, they kill a man who loses all restraint in sexual relations ; when any one yields to that sin, people say : "The gods will lead him into the thick bush and kill him there." To other sins they are quite indifferent. Mboza even asserted, with a sadness which reminded me of the complaints of Asaph in Ps. LXXII, that men of bad habits do not fall ill or meet with misfortune ; the cough only attacks the good ; wizards bewitch them and do not go to the bad fellows, "for the gods see that they are not worth anything!"

In conclusion, I should say that what is wanting in the conception of the ancestor-gods, as compared with the God of higher religions, is both transcendence and the moral attributes.

III. *General Characteristics of Ancestrolatry.*

If I had to characterise Thonga ancestrolatry, I would say :

It is a *spiritualistic* religion, in the sense that no idols are adored ; there is neither idolatry nor fetichism in it. Spirits and spirits alone are worshipped.

It is an *animistic* religion, as defined in the preceding chapter, the categories of spirit gods being numerous, and these spirits being worshipped in order to win their favour, and propitiated when they are angry.

Though consisting essentially of offerings and prayers, which are distinctly religious acts, *it is mingled with magic* to a considerable extent.

It is a *particularistic family* religion, each family having its own particular gods. We may also see in it the beginings of a *particularistic national* religion (the great mhamba).

It is a *social* religion, its prescriptions being aimed at keeping alive and strengthening the hierarchy, which is the main feature of the social order.

It is an *unsacerdotal* religion, there being no sacerdotal order, but at the same time the priesthood of the elder brother is strictly enforced.

It is a *non-moral* religion, by which I do not mean that it is *immoral*, i. e. opposed to the laws of morality, but that it has no, or at least very

789 stem which has been struck by lightning, i. e. by Heaven ; or the
772 magician will burn branches of the same tree in the garden itself and bring them near to the stalks in order that these may be surrounded by the smoke emanating from them. If a thief enters the ga.den with evil intentions, "Tilo dji ta mu dlaya, i. e. Heaven will kill him."

4) Heaven and the Balungwana.

772 In 1894, as previously stated, locusts, which had not been
825 seen for some fifty years, made their appearance on the shores of
776 Delagoa Bay, and also in Natal and the Transvaal. The popular imagination was, naturally, greatly stirred by this unusual phenomenon, which was at first greeted with smiles and astonishment, but which, later on, was the cause of endless lamentation. I was one day walking up the hill of Lourenço Marques with an old man, the counsellor of one of the sub-chiefs of Tembe, a thoughtful and intelligent person, when he said to me, with great earnestness, in a low voice, as if referring to some important event : "Have you not heard that in Maputju two dwarfs (psimhu-ñwanyana) fell from Heaven ; a little man and a little woman. They came to say to the people : "Do not kill the grasshoppers! They belong to us!" This counsellor only repeated what all thought and were saying in all the native villages ; these grasshoppers, arriving unexpectedly from on high, were a manifestation of Heaven, just like the lightning, rain, twins, or the nunu, and these celestial beings had come to announce it to men.

772 But belief in the existence of *special personages* in Heaven
776 did not originate in connection with these terribly destructive
821 insects. The idea had been familiar, for a long time past, to the Rongas, and probably to all the Thongas. These personages were not only described as dwarfs, but also as balungwana (p. 352). They were said to fall from Heaven at the time of the great rains. Thus, Timoteo Mandlati told me people had seen some of them appear, a long time ago, in the Nkuna country, and that they had gone back to heaven in a cloud ; they live in celestial space, and when it thunders without any rain falling, the Nkunas say :

"Balungwana ba tlanga henhla" — "The balungwana are at play up there." Or it is they who are singing in heaven when there is a prolonged roar of thunder, saying : "wuwu-wuwu!" 772 776 821

When some one passes along the road, they dispute up above as to who he may be. One says : "It is so and so," and the others contradict him. Then they spit on the traveller, who is quite astonished to see some saliva on his hand. He mistakes it for rain, and looks up to the sky to see where the rain is coming from. The balungwana then have a chance to see his face, and the one who has guessed rightly says to the others : "You see! I was right."

In Bilen I heard of a man who prevented children from picking the beautiful red flowers of Tecoma capensis, telling them that the balungwana wanted them for dresses. The same individual believed that these little men would bring oxen to him. 772 776

The Rongas say that a little man fell on the hill of Lourenço Marques, near the house of Sithini, the son of Mashaken, just before the famous war between Mozila and Mawewe (I. p. 28), the rival claimants to the kingdom of Gaza, and that this dwarf came as a presage of the troubles which were to follow. "Lots of folk saw him" said Charlie in 1895 ; (he was then a man of some forty years of age). "We were too young to be allowed to look at him ; the Whites took him and carried him off to Mozambique." — Heaven is therefore inhabited. This is generally admitted, but the idea, from all that one can gather, remains very vague.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THONGA RELIGION.

I. *The Origin of the Conception of Heaven.*

Ancestrolatry forms a clear, well-defined religion, with its theology (i. e., the ideas as regards the psikwembu), its sacrifices, and its prayers. The dim, mysterious ideas about Heaven, incorporated in or rather lying behind some of the most extraordinary rites of the tribe, bear a very different character. There is something incoherent, vague and 771 772 776 171

771 unexpected in them, and it would seem that, bearing as they do an
772 essentially deistic character, and accompanied by no true worship, they
776 might as well be absent from the horizon of the Thonga mind.

171 However, when we study other Bantu tribes, we come to exactly the opposite conclusion, i. e., that it would be indeed strange if no religious ideas of this kind were found amongst our tribe. In fact, this occurrence of a double set of religious ideas is universal amongst Bantus. They all believe in a kind of Supreme Being, an All-Father, who bears many different names, *Nzame* amongst the Fan and a great number of West African tribes, *Nyambe* amongst the Ba-Rotsi, *Leza* in some Zambezi and Rhodesian districts, *Mulungu* amongst fifteen East African tribes (1), *Unkulunkulu* in Zululand, *Nungungulu* round Inhambane, and *Mudimo* amongst the Ba-Sutho, etc., etc. The Thonga *Tilo* is, most likely, one of these names. The word probably comes from the root *ulu*, high, elevated, and *ilu*, heaven, which the Rev. P. Sacleux has found with that meaning amongst Central or West African tribes. (*Mulu*, amongst the Bembas ; *Liulu*, in Kimbundu ; *Diulu*, in Luba ; *Wilu*, in Luyi ; *Egulu* in Ganda ; *Idjulu*, amongst the Tongas of Zambezi, etc.). This root, with the personal prefix, has given birth to the term *Mugulu*, designating God in Tabwa and *Mukuru* in Herero. It may be that Mukuru is rather related to the *Unkulunkulu* of the Zulus, the Great One. (See Mgr. Le Roy, "La Religion des Primitifs," 1909, p. 498.)

In the South African tribes, however, the conception of the Supreme Being is not nearly so precise as in most parts of Central Africa. The Thonga Tilo, although sometimes invoked, is hardly a being, but seems rather to be a personification of Nature. Is this the original conception of the Supreme Being, or is it rather a transformation of this? I abstained, in *Les Ba-Ronga*, from expressing any definite opinion on this point. Further study has now led me to believe that the latter conclusion is the more probable, and that ideas concerning Heaven were more definite in former times. This, at any rate, is also the conviction of intelligent elderly Natives, who are able to remember the former ideas held by the tribe. They say : "As regards death, people now commonly affirm that it is caused by witchcraft, whilst formerly they attributed it to the agency of Heaven." Let us also notice the name of the dwarfs who are believed to inhabit Heaven, the *balungwana*. This word is a

(1) Comp. J. Torrend's *Comparative Grammar of the S. A. Bantu Languages*, p. 68.

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

diminutive of *Mulungu*, *balungu*, by which are designated, amongst the Zulus and Thongas, White people of every description, whether Europeans or Asiatics. Could the inhabitants of Heaven have been called "balungwana," on account of their resemblance to the Whites? It would hardly seem probable, for the name of the balungwana, and the ideas connected with them, were in existence long before White people were generally known, or had settled in the country. It is much more reasonable to suppose that the name of these mythical beings, as also that by which the Whites are designated, is a derivative of some other pre-existent term ; and what should this be if not the famous vocable "Mulungu," which stands for God, the One Supreme God, in so many of the Bantu dialects of East Africa, from Lake Victoria Nyanza to the Zambesi, to Senna and Quilimane? I should be inclined to think that the tribes in the neighbourhood of Delagoa were also acquainted with this name, which is so widely known, and that it has, in the course of centuries, disappeared from their theology, only leaving, as a last trace, the term balungwana, applied to the heavenly beings who occasionally descend to earth, and balungu, designating that superior race whose wisdom has always impressed the Blacks as supernatural. If this hypothesis were confirmed, we should have the right to conclude that the idea of Heaven, such as it is described in this chapter, is the disfigured remnant of a higher and monotheistic conception, held by the primitive Bantus before their dispersion, which has evolved in various ways amongst the different tribes.

II. *The Antiquity of Ancestrolatry.*

Ancestor Worship seems, on the other hand, to be an extremely ancient religion amongst mankind. There have been discovered of late years sepulchres of prehistoric date, which seem to show that the funeral rites of the first races were very similar to those practised by the Bantus of the present day. In comparing the burial of Sokis (I. p. 139) with that of a human being of the Mousterian age, whose remains were recently discovered by Hauser in the celebrated "Abri du Moustier" (Dordogne) (1) I noticed the following resemblances :

(1) See my paper "Deux enterrements à 20,000 ans de distance." *Anthropos*, 1900, I. v. Comp. also *L'homme préhistorique*. January, 1909.

171 1) In both cases, the corpse was treated with great, even affectionate
769 care, protected against the earth, and provided with a pillow.

2) The legs and arms had been bent towards the body, a custom widespread amongst primitive races, and directly due to the belief in an after-life.

3) The deceased is regarded as sleeping : hence the pillow provided for him.

4) His after-life is believed to be an exact continuation of his existence on earth. Hence the fact that the articles which he was accustomed to use are put on to, or inside, his grave, the mats, rugs, mug in one case, and silex or "coups de poing" in the other.

5) If the rites performed for Sokis may be explained by the hypothesis that he has become a *shikwembu*, a god endowed with divine powers, if they are in truth acts of worship, it is but reasonable to suppose that the same religious conceptions gave birth to the similar rites of the Mousterian Primitives. The Mousterian Age is one of the first periods of the Quaternary. Some palaeontologists believe it to be anterior to the last glacial period, and think that the dwellers in la Dordogne lived 20,000, even 50,000 years ago! They possessed, then, a religion, and this religion was probably Ancestrolatry.

III. *The Relation between Ancestrolatry and the Conception of Heaven.*

769 The conclusion which may be drawn from the two preceding
792 paragraphs is that both Ancestor Worship and the Conception of a
776 Supreme Being are of very ancient date, and the question naturally arises as to which is the older. I do not pretend here to be able to supply a solution to this great problem, but merely to draw the attention of my readers to the following facts.

1) When questioned as to the relative antiquity of their two sets of religious ideas, Thongas reply that they are unable to give an answer. Their conception of Heaven is so impersonal that they cannot draw any comparison between the two. Their neighbours, the Swazis and the Zulus, however, are very decided upon this point. The Rev. W. Challis, in *The East and the West* of July, 1908, summarises their statements as follows :

"Long ago a great and noble Bantu king was in the habit of climbing a twin-peaked mountain at daybreak, there to intercede with the Great Great One (Unkulunkulu) on behalf of his people. His son, who succeeded him, was afraid to draw near to the Great God whom his father worshipped, so he called upon the spirit of his father to intercede for him and his people before the Creator of all. Gradually each head of a house adopted this method of approaching God, until each family had its own ancestral spirits as mediators first, then merely as beings who brought good or bad luck, and who needed to be propitiated by sacrifice and constant flattery and attention. But God is not in their thoughts now ; only a vague tradition among the old men survives as to the existence of the Great Great One." 769 772 776

The Zulus affirm, so Callaway says, that the same proceeding took place amongst their ancestors. This seems to be a phenomenon similar to the adoration of saints in medieval times, after a period when religion had had a much purer and more transcendental character.

2) A second fact, which points in the same direction, is the contrast which exists in the conception of the ancestral spirits. On the one hand they are but men, who may be insulted (as was often the case with the saints to whom reference has just been made ; take, for instance, the incident of the striking of the image of St Antony of Padua by a worshipper, because the saint had not helped him to recover some lost property) ; on the other hand they are endowed with the qualities of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence in their relations with their descendants. It would seem as if the idea of divinity, which was not originally connected with the spirits of the departed, had been applied to them in an awkward and merely external fashion.

3) It is wonderful to notice how easily the idea of the Christian God is accepted by the Bantus. They have scarcely any difficulty in believing that this is the real God to whom worship is due. Livingstone long ago remarked this, and the truth of it has been confirmed by Miss Kingsley, for one, in regard to the Northern Bantus, and also by most of those who have endeavoured to win over these tribes to Christianity. It seems as if one were telling them an old story, with which they had been quite familiar but had now half forgotten. In regard to the Thongas I believe the psychological process to be as follows. When they hear of the *Shikwembu*, who is *in Heaven*, there at once takes place in their minds a coalescence, or reunion of the two main characteristics of their two religions ; — their *shikwembu* is personal but not transcendental ; their *Heaven* is transcendental but not personal.

769 God, the real God who is preached to them, is both personal and
772 transcendental ; it is as if two different kinds of electricity suddenly
776 came in contact with each other in their minds and produced a flash of light... The result is decisive. The two ideas can no longer be kept apart. When the Native has adopted the living God of Christianity, he either understands Him more and more fully, and is able to find great joy and satisfaction of soul in his new religion, or he abandons Him, and becomes godless, if he is unwilling to accept the morality of a true Christian life ; he very seldom returns to Ancestrolatty, nor to his former deistic and naturalistic conceptions. This is another proof that the knowledge of the one and only God, who reigns over all, was indeed sleeping in his heart and conscience, no doubt as a result of the ancient monotheistic conceptions of the Bantus.

The evolution of mankind has been a long one! Even if the Bantus formerly had the idea of God, this would not go to prove anything as regards the primitive religion of humanity. This question is entirely beyond the range of the present work, and even Science may perhaps never be able to answer it. I can therefore leave it out of consideration.

My last observation has shown the caducity of the Thonga religion. It is not able to stand before the advance of the higher revealed religions, Mohammedanism and Christianity. Hence the facility with which Thongas are converted to one or other of these beliefs. This fact is of considerable importance in respect to the future of the tribe, and it will be necessary for us to consider it in our Conclusion.

(See also *Some additional remarks on the idea of the Supreme Being and on Ancestor-worship in relation to Religious History*. App. IV.)

a medical course be open to educated Natives, if not a complete University course, at least such instruction as would allow them to treat their fellow men in a scientific manner, the medicine-men being gradually prevented from practising their very questionable art.

B. POSSESSION.

753 The curious psychic phenomenon which I am now about to describe belongs to the domain of medecine ; it is "the disease," or rather the "madness of the gods" (bubabyi bya psikwembu). But at the same time it bears a distinctly religious character, the spirits which are believed to cause the disease being *psikwembu*, spirits of deceased people, to whom worship will be addressed. On the other hand, the rites connected with the treatment of this kind of madness are definitely magical, and those who have suffered from it often become recognised magicians, claiming to possess supernatural powers.

This is a very interesting subject from the point of view of psychology and psychiatry. Phenomena of possession exist amongst most uncivilised races, even amongst more advanced peoples, and it would be useful to compare the manifestations of this disease amongst Bantus with those met with in other parts of the world. I shall however leave this task to professionals, and only try faithfully and clearly to describe and, if possible, to understand, the facts which I witnessed myself. This disease has spread enormously amongst the Thongas in the last fifty years. It is said to have been previously very rare, or even unknown ; since that time it has become quite an epidemic, although it is at the present moment rather on the decrease. Possession is more frequent amongst the Ba-Ronga than in the Northern clans.

1. *The Spirits which Cause the Disease.*

763 Strange to say, the gods or spirits which are credited with
776 the power of possessing people, are not the ancestors of the Thongas themselves, the ancestor-gods, but Zulu spirits and those

758 of the Ba-Ndjao tribe, who inhabit the country beyond the Sabie,
77% as far as the neighbourhood of Beira. It appears that the possessions which first occurred were due to the Zulu and Ngoni spirits ; possibly they coincided with the invasion of the warriors of Manukosi, and with the ever-increasing exodus of young men who go to work in the diamond mines at Kimberley, or the gold mines at Johannesburg, or Natal, and travel through territory occupied by Zulus. As regards the Ba-Ndjao spirits they are sometimes called *amandiki*, and are said to have followed the Thonga and Ngoni soldiers of Gungunyana, who established themselves for some years at Mosapa, right in the middle of the Ndjao country, to the North of the Sabie, and who, later on, came down again from that mountainous region into the fertile plain of Bilene. (Lower Limpopo.) On the other hand, when the war of 1894 to 1895 compelled the Northern Ba-Ronga, those from Mabota, Zihlahla and Nondwane to flee, they took with them, so the story goes, the gods who had possessed them, and "scattered" them so thoroughly in the countries of the North that, when they returned to their own homes, they were no longer molested by these *psikwembu*. That is what I was told by a Native. We must carefully note, at the outset, these two ideas : the tormenting spirits are the *manes of strangers* and not of the people of the country, and they frequently attack Thongas who happen to be travelling in such countries, and follow them in their further migrations (1).

The Ndjao possessions appear to be worse than the Zulu. "Bundjao bya karata" — "the Ndjao possession is painful." If the incantations used are in Zulu for Zulu possessions, they are in the Ndjao language when such are caused by Ndjao spirits, and those who suffer from this affliction are known by the large white beads which they wear in their hair. Sometimes they have merely a short string of small beads, hanging down somewhere from the head. I well remember on the banks of a stream, in a

(1) However, in the case of Mholombo, the spirit was an old Tembe chief, a true ancestor, and in that of Nwashishwana there was a throng of occupants, amongst them her own son, Manuel, who had died some time before. In the case of Mbona it was also a Ronga, but he had died in a *foreign* country (See later).

wooded valley called Nhlalalene, where we had made a halt during one of our journeyings, seeing a good-looking young woman wearing one of these curious ornaments. I was struck with the sight, and asked my companion why she was thus decorated. — "She invokes the spirits of the Ba-Ndjao," was the reply.

II. *Beginning and Diagnosis of the Disease.*

I have carefully studied the story of many cases of possession amongst the Ba-Ronga (See *Bulletin de la Société Neuchâteloise de Géographie*. Tome X, p. 388). Most of them began by a distinct crisis, in which the patient was unconscious, but this does not seem to have been brought about by any previous nervous trouble. A woman of the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques, *Ñwashinhwana*, fled from her home and threw herself into the Bay. The contact with the cold water restored her to her senses, after which the bones declared that she had *psikwembu*. Another, *Mholombo*, heard a voice calling her during a dream ; it was the possessing spirit, which revealed itself later on as a chief long since dead. I will now give full details of the case of *Mboza*, who was himself possessed at one time, and later on became a regular exorcist. After having worked in Kimberley for some time, he returned home in good health. Soon afterwards, however, he became lame for six months. He attributed his difficulty in walking to rheumatism (shifambo). There was some improvement in his condition, but he began to feel other symptoms ; he lost his appetite and almost entirely ceased to eat. Here is his testimony : "One day, having gone with another young man to gather juncus, in order to manufacture a mat, the psikwembu suddenly started in me" (ndji sunguleka ~~ki~~ psikwembu psikañwe). I came back home, trembling in all my limbs. I entered the hut, but suddenly I rose to my feet and began to attack the people of the village ; then I ran away, followed by my friends, who seized me, and at once the spirits were scattered (hangalaka). When I became conscious again, I was told I had hurt a *khehla* (a man with the wax crown (I. p. 129), and had struck other people on their backs :

APPENDIX V (See p. 536).

The Murimi Movement, an attempt on the part of the Thonga Tribe to get rid of witchcraft.

In the year 1913 (or 1914) the members of one of the Hlengwe clans living near the Sabie River, in the extreme north of the Thonga territory, seeing that the crops were bad, game wanting, and that even honey was scarce, contributed each of them a small sum of money, collected £ 10 and sent messengers to Myali, the Kalanga god who dwells in a cave in Machonaland, in order to regain prosperity. They were well received by the priests of Myali, who introduced them to the god they serve. They had to pass through a tunnel, with a big rock hanging over their heads. On the other side of this tunnel there was a kind of amphitheatre of rocks, enclosing a very clean and well-swept space. A voice from the rocks above greeted them in Zulu : "Good morning, my children", and they were given a pouch full of tobacco with the following instructions : "When you reach your home, take a snuff of this tobacco ; then go to your gardens, blow your noses and spread the nasal mucus in the soil ; henceforth you will have abundant harvests." The Hlengwe messengers returned home and began to use the precious drug, but this tobacco of Murimi, as it was called, had a marvellous fate. It found purchasers throughout the Thonga tribe, and during four years all the Thonga clans performed the new rite, the rite of Murimi, in the conviction that a new era had set in in which there would be no more famine and in which witchcraft, that great enemy of humanity, which causes disease, robs, and kills, would be expelled for ever.

Who is this Myali? He is the same personage who is called Ñwali in other parts of the country, the same also as Ra-Luvimbi, the god of the Ba-Venda, to whom they pray to obtain rain (See p. 321). His sacred cave is in the Matoppo hills, in the midst of that extraordinary desert of rocks in which Cecil Rhodes chose the spot for his grave, some fifteen miles further south. Mr Eliott, who was Native Commissioner in this region, told me that the description of the cave given above was exact. I will not discuss here the origin of the cult of Myali, called also Mlimo, a term probably corresponding to the Sutho Modimo, which would seem to have been transformed into Murimi when it was adopted by the Thongas. This is a most interesting subject to which I would draw the attention of our Rhodesian colleagues. Myali has med-

754 iums, consecrated girls (bampouka) set apart from their youth to be-
776 come the wives of his priests ; the rite of the magical tobacco, which is
771 a fecundation rite, is unknown in South African ancestrolatry. Everything would appear to suggest that this cult is of foreign origin. A fact which is worthy of special notice is this : *Myali is the enemy of wizards.* If anyone guilty of witchcraft approaches his cave, he will be struck dead, and his priests will have nothing to do with witchcraft cases.

I cannot explain in detail how the new cult spread from the Hlengwe country down to the Maputju region, thus creating in the Thonga tribe a unity which has but seldom been attained. Certain individuals appear to have availed themselves of the new belief to do a profitable piece of business. They bought a part of the original tobacco of Murimi, mixed it with ordinary tobacco and went to the chiefs offering to let their subjects snuff the miraculous drug. I happened to meet one of these prophets of Murimi, who also called himself Murimi and who had been arrested by the Portuguese Administrator of Morakwen, as the Authorities seem to have feared at a certain moment that the agitation caused by this movement might have a political character. This particular Murimi appeared to be a very simple type of man. He was half lame, his arms were crooked, and he told me that his reason for fighting the wizards was that it was they who had reduced him to that miserable condition ; he was convinced that his efforts to combat them were very beneficial to the country. But notwithstanding these altruistic inclinations, he did not neglect his own interests ; anyone admitted to snuff the tobacco had to give the chief a fowl or a "nkinyenta", i. e. 500 reis, then of the value of 1 s. 6d, and Murimi received a considerable share of the fee.

Wonderful rumours preceded the distributor of tobacco. It was said that he had been emprisoned by one of the Administrators, further north, but had suffered nothing through this infringement of his liberty ; the following night he had been miraculously transported to the bed of the Commandant, whilst the latter had taken his place in the gaol! He was now approaching the town of Lourenço Marques in the form of a gigantic dragon before whom everyone fled!

754 The following is the description of the manner in which the Murimi
771 rite was performed in the Matalane region, some 15 miles north of Lourenço Marques. The chief Magebeza summons all his subjects to assemble early in the morning in a forest (Sept. 1916). His counsellors are present and bring with them the lame prophet holding in his hands a sala shell containing the tobacco. A woman comes and, kneels down in front of him; she holds out her open hand, palm upwards. Murimi takes

754 771 occasion. At the conclusion of their speeches they pronounce his name. Though no special offering is made except the sweet potato and the sala fruit just referred to, and no special ceremony of worship is performed, Murimi has clearly become the object of adoration of his devotees and is much nearer their hearts and consciences than the ancestor-gods.

A year or two went by and the Thongas were obliged to confess that the produce of the fields in the meagre sand of their hills was not richer than in former years. People died just as before ; the great salvation which the worshippers of Murimi had expected did not come, and the tribe understood vaguely that it had been the victim of a gigantic hoax. At least when the question was put to the devotees of the new cult : "What about Murimi?" they smiled and did not answer a word, and very soon Murimi was forgotten.

754 771 776 It might be thought that this strange movement was the result of European influence ; it bears a strongly monotheistic character, and Murimi is certainly very different from the ancestor-gods and from Tilo, Heaven, and much more akin to the Christian God. It must however be observed that very little information was given about this god, who was to a certain extent identified with his prophets, the latter being named Murimi as well as himself. But setting aside the small part played by Murimi, we are forced to recognise that the new rite is essentially and authentically Bantu. It is directly connected with witchcraft, the old Thonga animistic belief ; we have already met, in connection with the treatment of smallpox, with the idea of destroying witchcraft by means of a collective confession and repudiation (p. 465). The taboos accompanying the new rite are those we have everywhere found in the marginal periods or when an initiation was taking place. The Murimi Movement is thus a genuine creation of primitive Thonga mentality. Changes are taking place so rapidly that it is probably the last. I am glad therefore to have had an opportunity of witnessing it and of publishing the record of such an interesting event. Further details will be found in a paper which appeared in *Le Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*. 15 Décembre 1924. Paris.